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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNFB/FBI WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2436
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

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STATE FOR S/CT, EB, EUR/AGS \
FBI FOR OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS \
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/20/2016 \
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PARM](#) [ETTC](#) [SZ](#)
SUBJECT: SWISS COUNTERTERRORISM OVERVIEW - SCENESETTER FOR \
FBI DIRECTOR MUELLER \

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REF: A. BERN 100 \
 B. BERN 10 \
 C. 2005 BERN 1865 \

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Classified By: Pol/Econ Counselor Eric Sandberg, Reasons 1.4 b/d \

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1.(C) Summary: Switzerland and Liechtenstein are considered \
low-threat target for terrorist attacks, but Bern \
acknowledges that Islamist groups could use the country as a \
transit point, logistics center, or haven for terrorist \
finances. While violent crime in both countries is \
relatively low, officials remain concerned about \
international organized criminal groups and extreme \
right-wing and left-wing political elements who occasionally \
mobilize for demonstrations surrounding major events, such as \
the annual World Economic Forum in Davos. Swiss officials \
maintain that there are few Islamic extremists in the \
country, but a small number of arrests in the past two years \
suggests there may be more under the surface. Bilateral law \
enforcement and intelligence cooperation is improving, but at \
a gradual pace; Swiss leaders insist that they can address \
the threat with little outside assistance. The Swiss media \
and individual members of Parliament have placed a greater \
focus on alleged USG wrongdoings in the War on Terror than on \
the terrorist threat itself. As for Liechtenstein, officials \
work very cooperatively with USG counterparts, as they seek \
to ameliorate their reputation as a money-laundering center. \
End Summary. \

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Anti-Terror Measures \
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2.(U) Switzerland implemented UN sanctions even prior to \
becoming a full member in 2002. Along with UN lists, the \
Swiss Economic and Finance ministries have drawn up their own \
list of around 44 individuals and entities connected with \
international terrorism (Al-Qaeda) or its financing. Swiss \
authorities have thus far blocked about 82 accounts totaling \
\$28 million (SFr 34 million) from individuals or companies \
linked to Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda under UN resolutions. \
The Swiss Federal Prosecutor also froze separately 41 \
accounts representing about \$28 million (SFr 34 millions) on \
the ground they were related to terrorist financing. Swiss \
officials estimate significant overlap between the US and UN \
lists. Switzerland signed and ratified all of the 12 UN \
anti-terrorism conventions as of September 2003. \

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3.(U) For its part, Liechtenstein has frozen about \$145 \
thousand in Taliban/Al-Qaeda assets under UNSC Resolution \
[1267](#). The principality has taken notable strides to combat \
money laundering and other illegal activity since 1999; it \

joined the Egmont Group in 2001, signed a mutual legal \
assistance treaty with the United States in 2003, and was \
FATF certified that same year. Liechtenstein has also \
ratified all of the relevant UN conventions. \

Bilateral Cooperation \

4.(C) Following 9/11, the Swiss agreed to sign an operative \
working agreement (OWA) with the USG permitting intensified \
information sharing on Al-Qaeda and allowing an FBI agent to \
sit in the Federal Criminal Police Counterterrorism Unit. We \
are in the final stages of negotiating a broadened OWA to \
allow joint investigations on counterterrorism matters. As \
forthcoming as some contacts are, the Swiss law enforcement \
community in general remain reluctant to open up to the \
United States. The sentiment was expressed best by Justice \
Minister Blocher to the Ambassador. Blocher said that \
Switzerland shared America's counterterrorism goals; \
Switzerland will worry about Switzerland, and the U.S. can \
worry about the rest of the world. The least cooperative \
Swiss agency (with us and with other Swiss agencies) is the \
Federal Service for Analysis and Prevention (DAP) -- the \
internal intelligence service. The external service, under \
the Swiss Department of Defense, is more cooperative. \

5.(C) In many ways, Liechtenstein officials are a model of \
what we wish the Swiss would become. Shocked by the \
international notoriety it earned in the 1990s, officials in \
the tiny principality decided to join FATF and cooperate with \
partners. The MLAT it signed with the United States in 2003 \

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was the first of its kind for Liechtenstein. They make as \
much use of it as do our law enforcement agencies. \

Significant counterterrorism investigations \

6.(C) Swiss prosecutors have launched several investigations \
of suspected Al-Qaeda operatives in Switzerland. As yet, \
prosecutors have had unimpressive results. \

-- September 11: The 9/11 attacks resulted in greater \
external intelligence and police cooperation between the \
United States and Switzerland, as well as with Liechtenstein. \
After a significant delay, the Swiss agreed to share phone \
records from Al-Qaeda operatives using anonymous Swisscom \
phones. The use of these phones by terrorists prompted the \
Parliament two years later to require identification \
documents for Swisscom subscribers. \

-- Al-Taqwa: In December 2001, Switzerland froze the assets \
of Al-Taqwa Management, a financial services firm accused by \
the United States of helping to fund Al-Qaeda. Swiss police \
raided Al-Taqwa's offices and froze the assets of its board \
members. In March 2005, managing director Youssef Nada \
lodged an appeal with the Federal Criminal Court to have \
charges dropped for lack of evidence of criminal wrongdoing. \
Nada acknowledged that he was an Islamic activist and member \
of the Muslim Brotherhood, but denied he was connected to \
terrorist financing. The Swiss Federal Prosecutor, \
frustrated by the lack of cooperation from Bahamian \
authorities regarding aspects of Al-Taqwa's activities there \
and otherwise pessimistic about attaining sufficient evidence \
to convict, dropped the case in June 2005. The Swiss \
government was required to pay legal compensation to Nada. \

-- Yassin Qadi: After the United States named Saudi Arabian \
businessman Yassin Qadi a global terrorist and the UN placed \
him under sanctions, Switzerland froze \$21 million in Qadi's \
assets held in a Geneva bank. \

-- Jerba Bombing: Since the Jerba Bombings in April 2002, \
Swiss officials have been investigating the whereabouts of a \
Swiss citizen, Mohamed Ben Hedi, who had been secretary of \
the Salah Islamic Center in Biel. \

-- Riyadh Bombings: As a result of investigations following \
the May 2003 bombings in Riyadh, Swiss police in January 2004 \
arrested ten Muslims who were suspected of providing \
logistical support for the attacks. The remaining three \
suspects were released on their own recognizance in late 2005. \

-- Madrid Bombings: In the fall of 2004, Spanish police \
identified Mohamed Achraf -- a rejected asylum seeker in \
Switzerland awaiting deportation -- as the suspected \
ringleader of a Salafist group "Martyrs of Morocco" that was \
plotting to bomb the Spanish High Court. News of the Spanish \
investigation surprised Zurich cantonal police, who had not \

been informed by the Swiss internal service, DAP. Achraf was \
deported to Spain in January 2005. \

-- Internet Incitement: In March, 2005, Swiss authorities \
arrested Malika Al-Aroed, charging her and her husband, Moez \
Garsallaoui, a "Tunisian fundamentalist," with "posting \
manuals for the manufacture of bombs," as well as "images of \
murder" on the website www.islamic-minibar.com. According to \
press reports, Al-Aroed had been acquitted in Brussels in \
2003 of charges that she was involved in the attack on Afghan \
opposition leader Ahmad Shah Mas'ud. The presiding judge \
there had called her a "dangerous extremist." Another \
Islamist of Egyptian origin, Muhammed Al-Ghanam, was \
apprehended using the Geneva University server to spread \
extremist messages, but was not arrested. \

-- Yeslam Bin Ladin: In August 2005, the Swiss Federal Court \
halted Swiss legal assistance to a French investigation of \
two companies owned by Yeslam Bin Ladin (Osama's half \
brother) after an appeal by the companies. \

Muslims in Switzerland \

7.(U) The Muslim population in Switzerland has grown rapidly \

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in the last two decades, now reaching around 310,000, or 4.3 \
percent of the Swiss population. The majority of these, \
roughly 200,000, come from former Yugoslavia and tend to be \
moderate or secular in their views. Another 70,000 are of \
Turkish background, have long been in Switzerland, and are \
also moderate. Only the North African population, largely \
from Morocco, are seen as a possible source of Islamic \
extremism. There are no Islamic political parties in \
Switzerland; the Muslim population is divided along ethnic \
lines. There are only two mosque buildings in Switzerland \
(Zurich and Geneva), but over a hundred makeshift Islamic \
centers operate. \

8.(SBU) While Swiss authorities recognize that the Muslim \
population could contain extremists, they rate the threat \
from right-wing Neo-nazis and left-wing Swiss political \
extremists as being much higher. Swiss authorities believe \
that those Islamists present consider the country a "refuge" \
rather than a "place to carry out operations." A Special \
Report on Extremism issued late last year maintains that \
almost all radical groups represented in Switzerland are \
Sunni organizations whose primary goals are the establishment \
of Islamic governments in their homelands. \
The principal groups in this category are En Nahdha, the \
Tunisian Islamic Front, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic \
Salvation Front (FIS), the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the \
Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), Hamas, \
Hizbollah and Al-Takfir wal-Hijra. \

9.(C) The best known Islamists in Switzerland are the \
Ramadans, Tariq and Hani, of the Islamic Center in Geneva. \
Tariq Ramadan, formerly a professor of philosophy and \
grandson of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna, is \
well-known throughout Europe. He is sometimes hailed as a \
moderate, at other times attacked as a wolf in sheep's \
clothing, putting a palatable front to fundamentalist \
activities. Offered a teaching position at Notre Dame \
University in 2004, his visa was revoked by DHS, and he \
withdrew a subsequent application. The UK Government has \
included Ramadan in an advisory body to assist in their \
outreach efforts with its Muslim minority. \

10.(U) Hani Ramadan was suspended from his duties as a public \
school teacher in the fall of 2002, following the publication \
of an article in the French newspaper "Le Monde," in which he \
spoke out in favor of the stoning of adulterers. He was \
dismissed in 2003, following an administrative investigation, \
but he successfully appealed the decision. However, \
following a second investigation, the Geneva Cantonal \
Government confirmed Ramadan's dismissal and removed him from \
the cantonal payroll in December 2004. In October 2005, the \
Swiss Justice Ministry denied a work permit to a Turkish Imam \
invited to work at the Islamic Center in Geneva, due to the \
Imam's extremist views. \

Swiss Media Push-back on the War on Terrorism \

11.(C) Since the Washington Post claimed in early November \
2005 that the United States was operating hidden prisons in \
Europe, the Swiss media has gone full bore in identifying USG \
sins, real and imagined. Any news on Guantanamo or Abu \
Ghraib is guaranteed front-page treatment, whereas Al-Qaeda \

attacks are relegated to the back pages. Of particular \
concern is the issue of overflights by alleged CIA charter \
planes. Italian prosecutors allege that a U.S. military jet \
traversed Swiss airspace on the day Milan cleric Abu Omar was \
kidnapped. The Swiss government has repeatedly asked the USG \
to explain the flight and four charter plane landings at \
Geneva Airport. Washington has yet to respond. \

12.(C) Recently, a Swiss tabloid published a leaked Swiss \
intelligence report of an intercept of an Egyptian government \
fax. The Swiss Federal Council has condemned the leak and \
its subsequent publication, and the government has launched \
administrative and criminal investigations into the matter. \
The intercepted Egyptian fax claimed that the Egyptian \
government knew of 23 Iraqi and Afghani prisoners transferred \
by the USG to prisons in Romania and other Eastern European \
countries. Swiss officials apologized to Ambassador \
Willeford for the leak and for the press's overreaction to \
it. The Ambassador cautioned officials that Switzerland's \

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obsession with the prisons/overflight matter -- driven in \
significant measure by Swiss Senator Dick Marty -- risked \
overwhelming Washington's perceptions of Switzerland. Marty, \
acting in his capacity as head of the Council of Europe \
Parliamentary Assembly's Justice Commission and not in any \
official Swiss government capacity, greeted the information \
cautiously, but criticized the Swiss and other European \
governments for not disclosing information on the prisoner \
issue. \

Comment \

13.(C) Comment: Despite being somewhat shaken by attacks in \
London and Madrid, the Swiss internal security service \
continues to assess that Switzerland is relatively safe and \
that there is no evidence yet of any activity beyond \
logistical support for Islamic extremists. Swiss opinion \
leaders among the Parliament and media exhibit little evident \
concern about the terrorist threat to Switzerland, perhaps \
contributing to their tendency to focus their criticism on \
the USG reaction, rather than the initial threat itself. \
Embassy engagement with Swiss counterparts, reinforced by \
senior-level visits by USG officials, are helping to move the \
Swiss to be more forthcoming on information sharing and joint \
investigations. Absent a direct attack on Swiss interests, \
however, the process is liable to move very gradually. End \
comment. \

Willeford \